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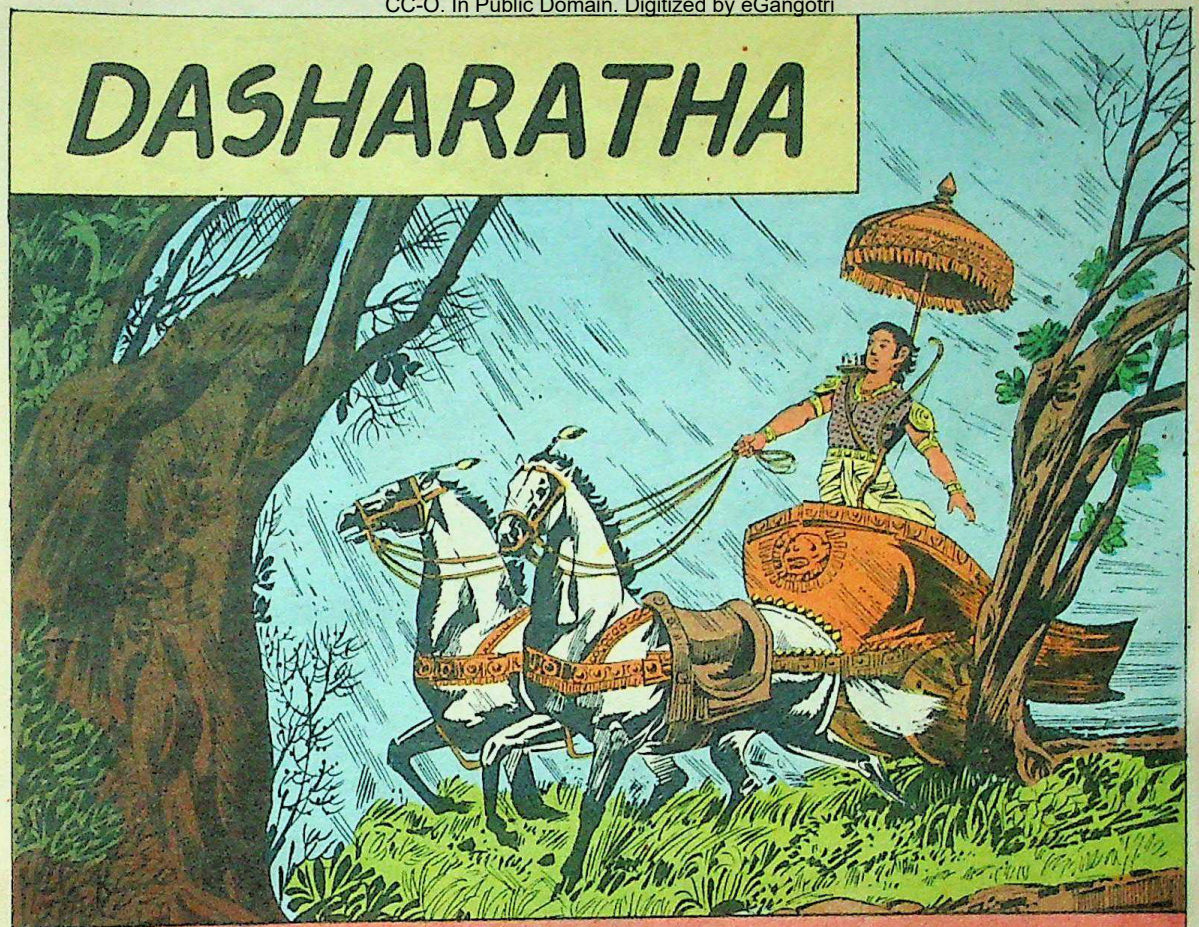
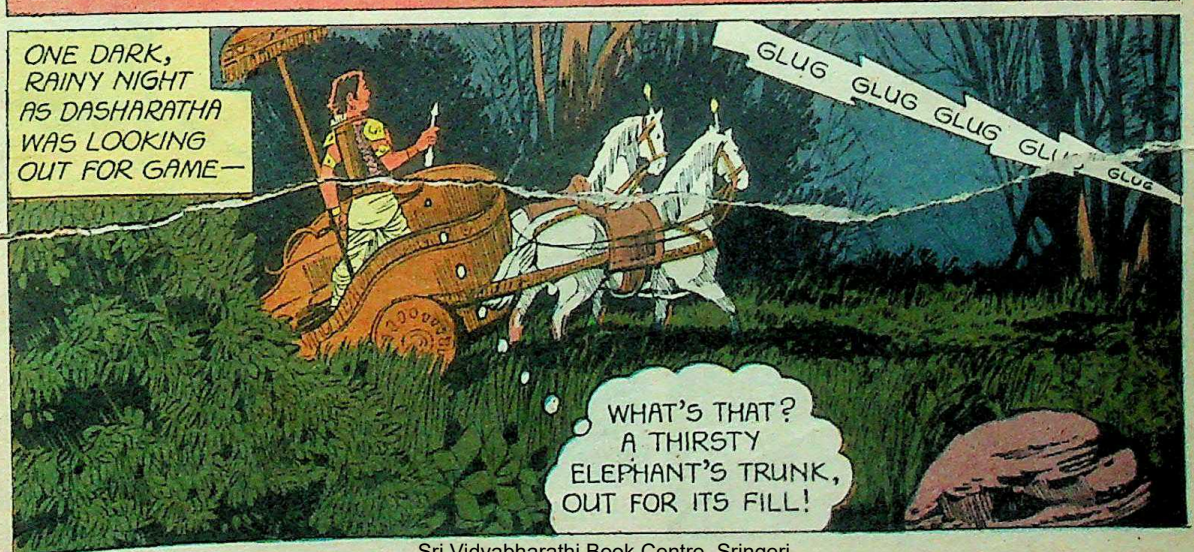
DASHARATHA



DASHARATHA, THE SON OF AJA AND INDUMATI, WAS THE BELOVED CROWN PRINCE OF AYODHYA, THE CAPITAL OF THE FLOURISHING KINGDOM OF KOSALA ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER SARAYU. LIKE HIS FATHER, YOUNG DASHARATHA WAS A SKILFUL ARCHER. HE COULD HIT HIS TARGET GUIDED ONLY BY SOUND. AND HE LOVED TO EXERCISE THIS SKILL.



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HE AIMED AT THE SOUND AND LET HIS DEADLY ARROW FLY. WHEN THE ARROW FOUND ITS MARK—

AH! MURDER. BUT I HAVE HARMED NONE. AH! MY POOR, OLD, BLIND PARENTS! I LEAVE YOU, HELPLESS.

DASHARATHA HAD MISTAKEN THE GURGLE OF THE HERMIT'S FILLING PITCHER FOR THE SOUND OF AN ELEPHANT DRINKING WATER.

FOR A MOMENT HE STOOD PETRIFIED.

WHAT. HAVE I DONE! I WHO AM A VIRTUOUS KOSALA PRINCE, THE PROTECTOR OF THE WEAK!

THEN, HE RAN TO THE SPOT FROM WHERE THE HUMAN CRY HAD COME. AS SOON AS THE DYING YOUTH SAW HIM —

O PRINCE, MY THIRSTY [illegible] PARENTS ARE WAITING AT THE HERMITAGE NEAR BY. GO AND TELL THEM ABOUT ME. BUT FIRST REMOVE THIS ARROW. LET DEATH RELIEVE ME OF THIS PAIN.

DASHARATHA DID AS HE WAS TOLD. THEN, FILLING THE PITCHER WITH WATER, HE MADE HIS WAY TO THE HERMITAGE.

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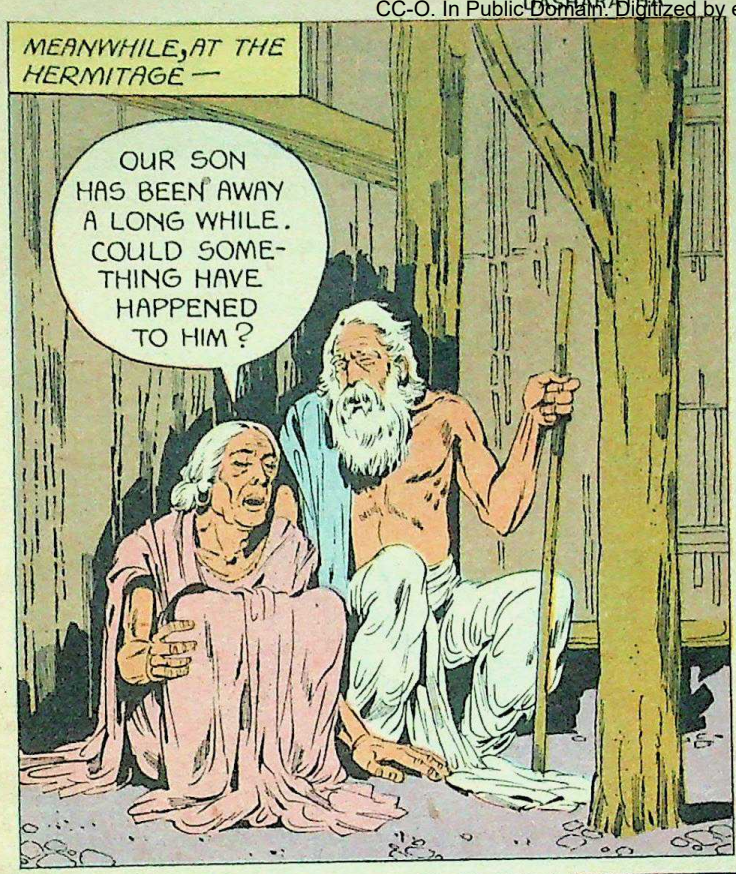

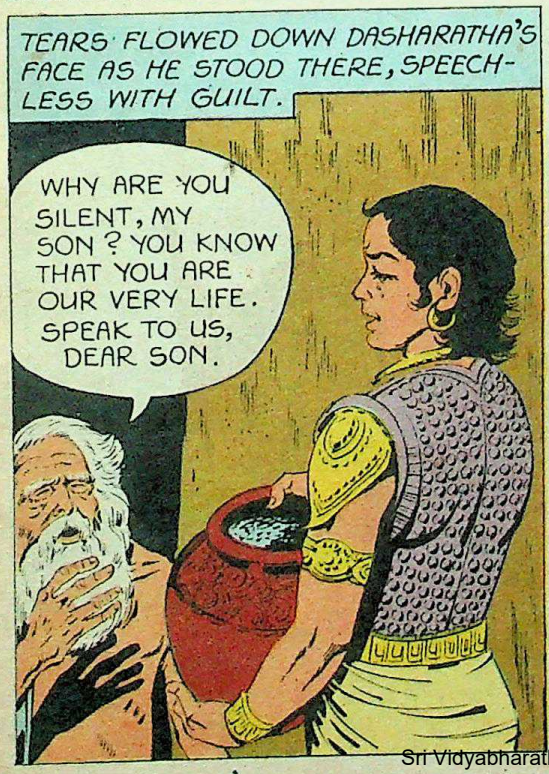

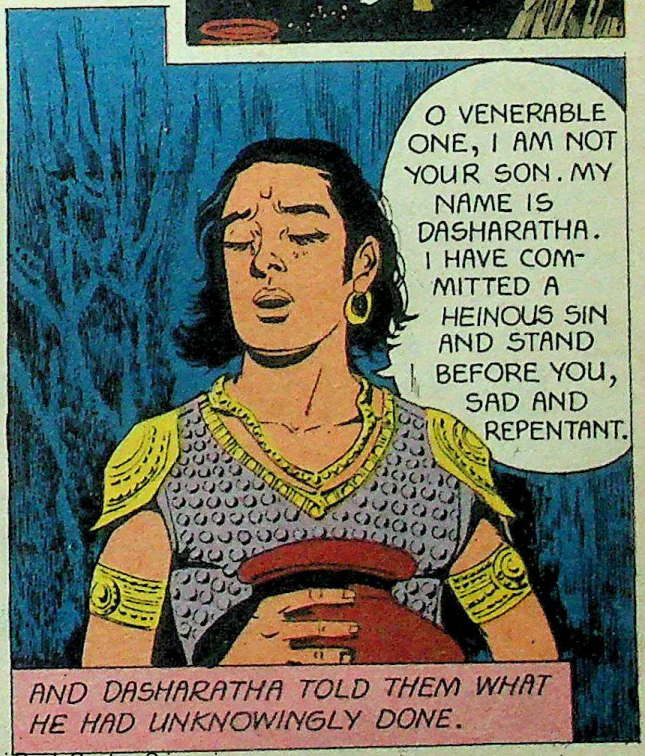

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THE OLD COUPLE SAT STUNNED FOR A FEW SECONDS. THEN PAST THE CHOKING GRIEF CAME THE WORDS.

IT WAS MY SON. OUR ONLY SON. YOU KILLED HIM.

THE BEREFT FATHER CURSED DASHARATHA.

YOUR SON TOO SHALL BE PARTED FROM YOU. AND YOU SHALL DIE GRIEVING FOR HIM.

A THOROUGHLY SHAKEN DASHARATHA RETURNED TO HIS PALACE.

BUT THE INCIDENT GRADUALLY FADED FROM HIS MEMORY. ONE DAY AJA SENT FOR HIM.

DASHARATHA, EVER SINCE YOUR MOTHER DIED THE KINGDOM HAS BECOME A BURDEN TO ME. YOU HAVE COME OF AGE. NOW YOU RULE THE LAND AND LET ME RETIRE TO THE FOREST.

SOON AFTER, ON THE ADVICE OF HIS MINISTERS AND SPIRITUAL GUIDES, DASHARATHA MARRIED KAUSALYA, A PRINCESS OF KOSALA.

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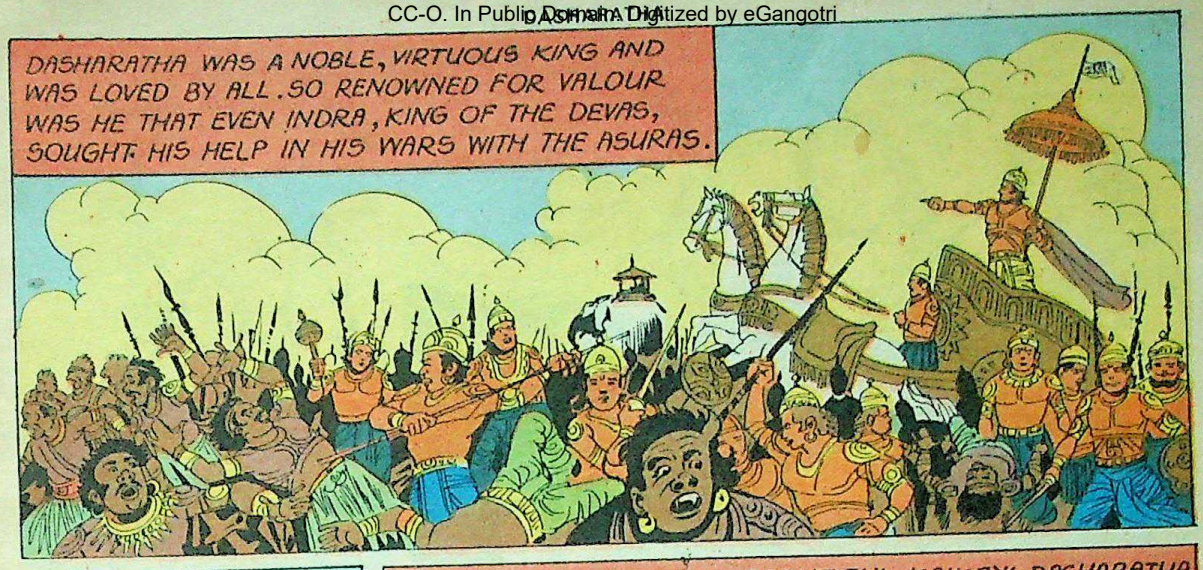

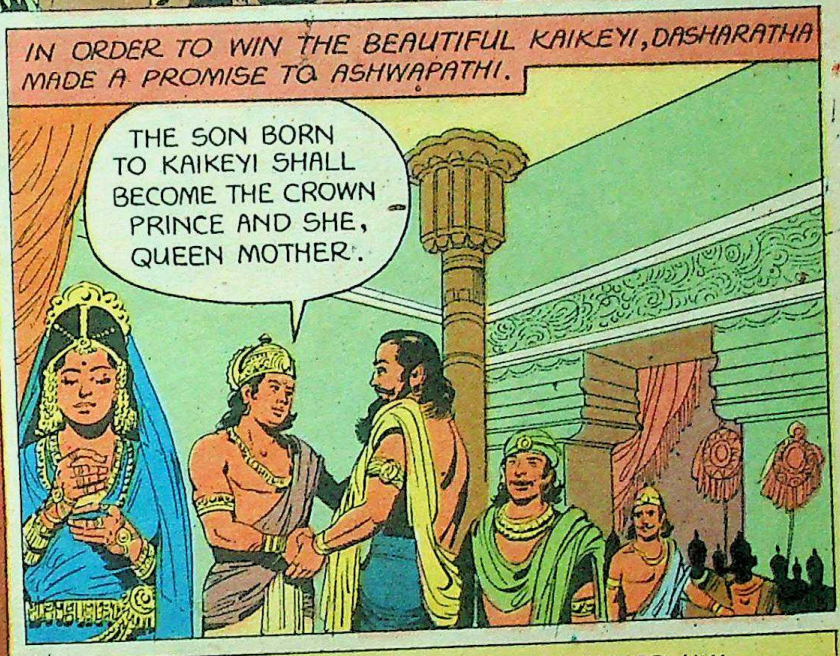

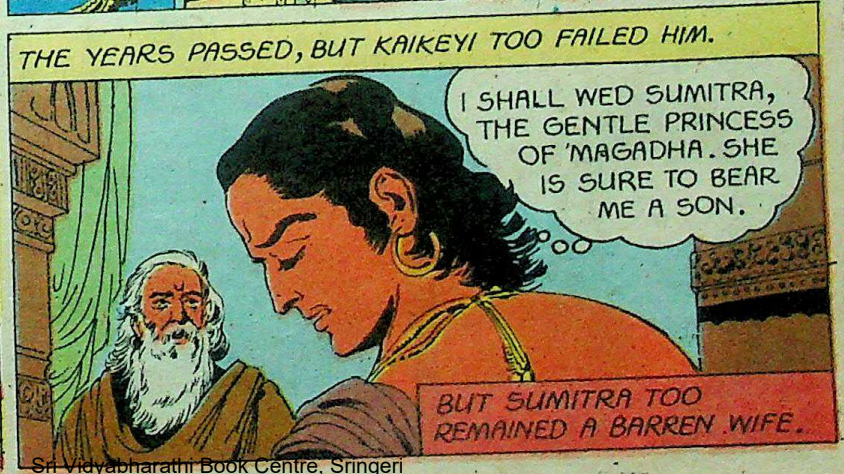

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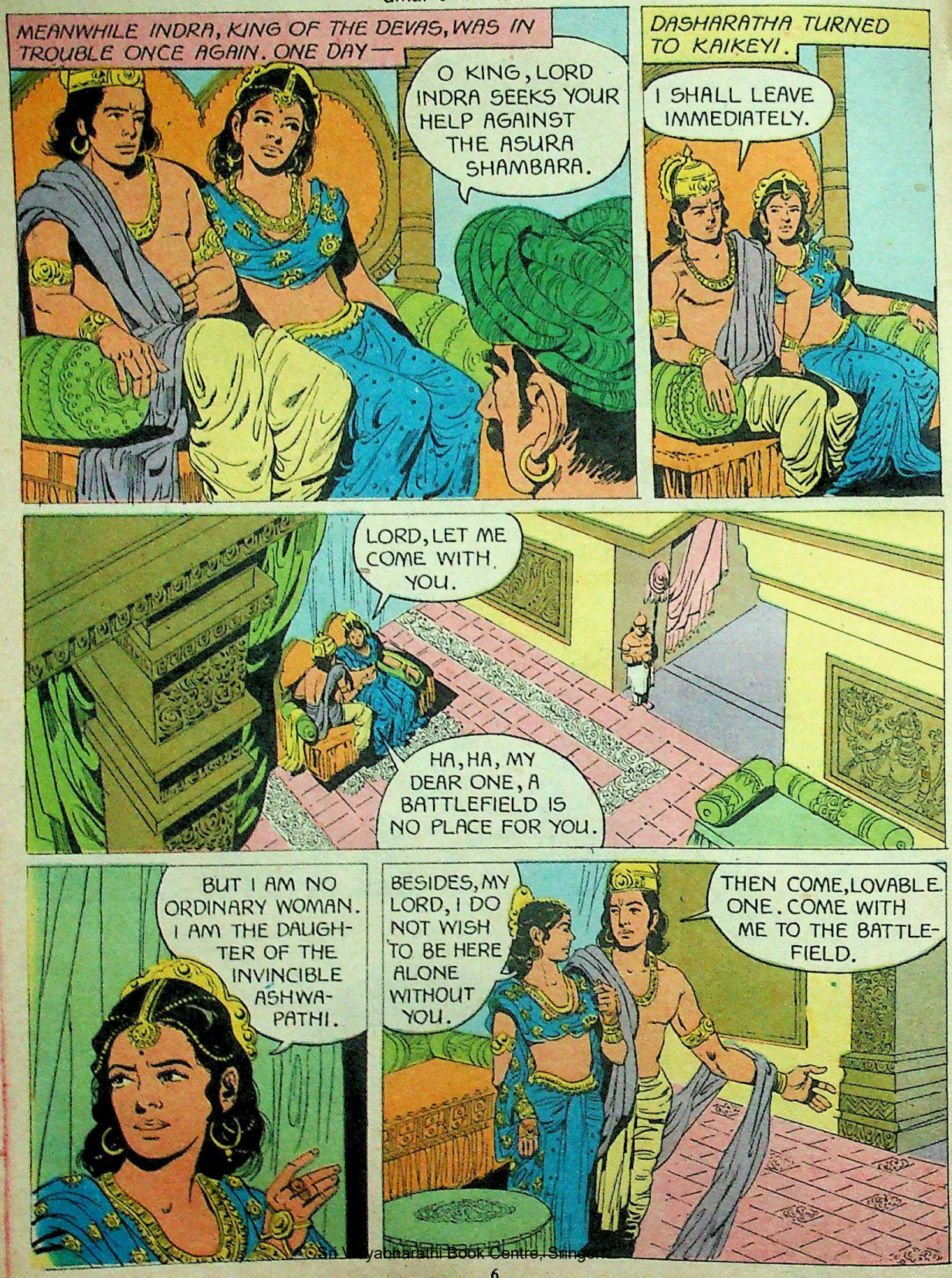

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THE BATTLE WAS A TERRIBLE ONE AND THE ASURAS WERE ROUTED; BUT A WOUNDED DASHARATHA LAY ON THE FIELD, SENSELESS, ALMOST DEAD. KAIKEYI RODE UP TO HIM IN HER CHARIOT.

DEAR HUSBAND, I WILL NOT LET YOU LEAVE ME. I WILL NURSE YOU BACK TO A FULL LIFE.

SHE HAD HIM REMOVED TO HER TENT AND TENDED HIM DAY AND NIGHT TILL HE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS. AS SOON AS HE OPENED HIS EYES—

KAIKEYI, MY DEAREST QUEEN, YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME BACK TO LIFE. ASK ANY TWO BOONS OF ME.

AT THIS MOMENT, WITH YOU ALIVE, I HAVE ALL I NEED, MY LORD. I'LL ASK FOR THE BOONS WHEN I NEED THEM.

FROM THEN ON KAIKEYI BECAME DASHARATHA'S FAVOURITE QUEEN. THE GENTLE YOUNG SUMITRA, UNABLE TO BEAR HIS NEGLECT, SPOKE HER HEART OUT TO KAUSALYA WHOSE SPECIAL PROTECTION SHE ENJOYED.

EVER SINCE THE BOLD KAIKEYI ACCOMPANIED OUR LORD TO THE BATTLE-FIELD, HE HAS NO EYES FOR US. IT HURTS ME.

NEVER MIND, SUMITRA. LET US CONTINUE TO SERVE HIM WITH LOVE AND DEVOTION.

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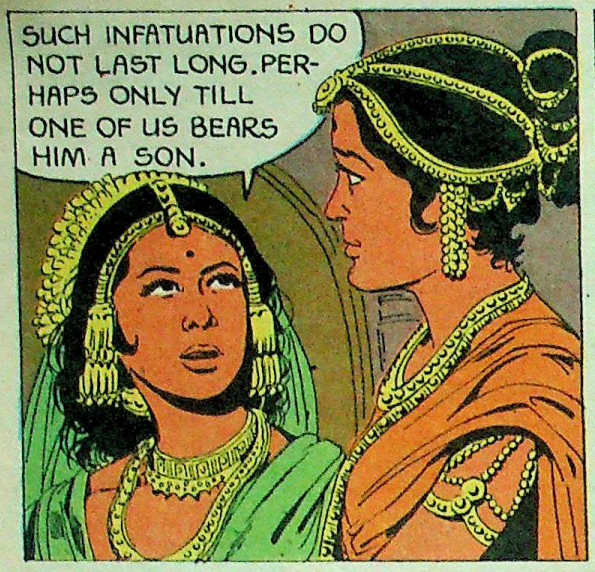

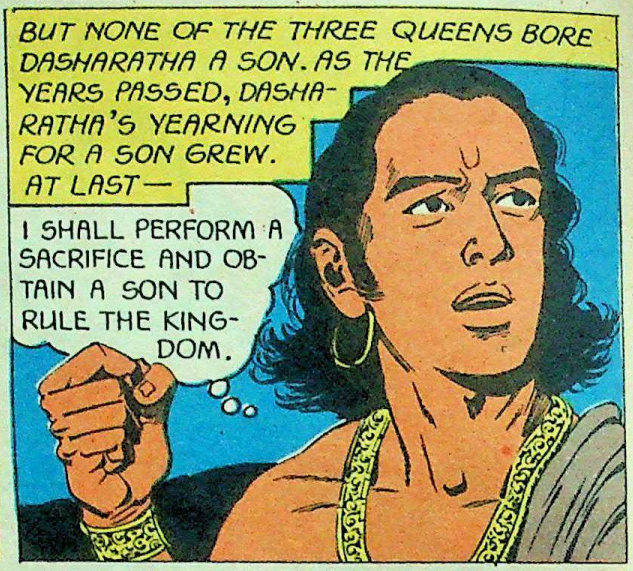

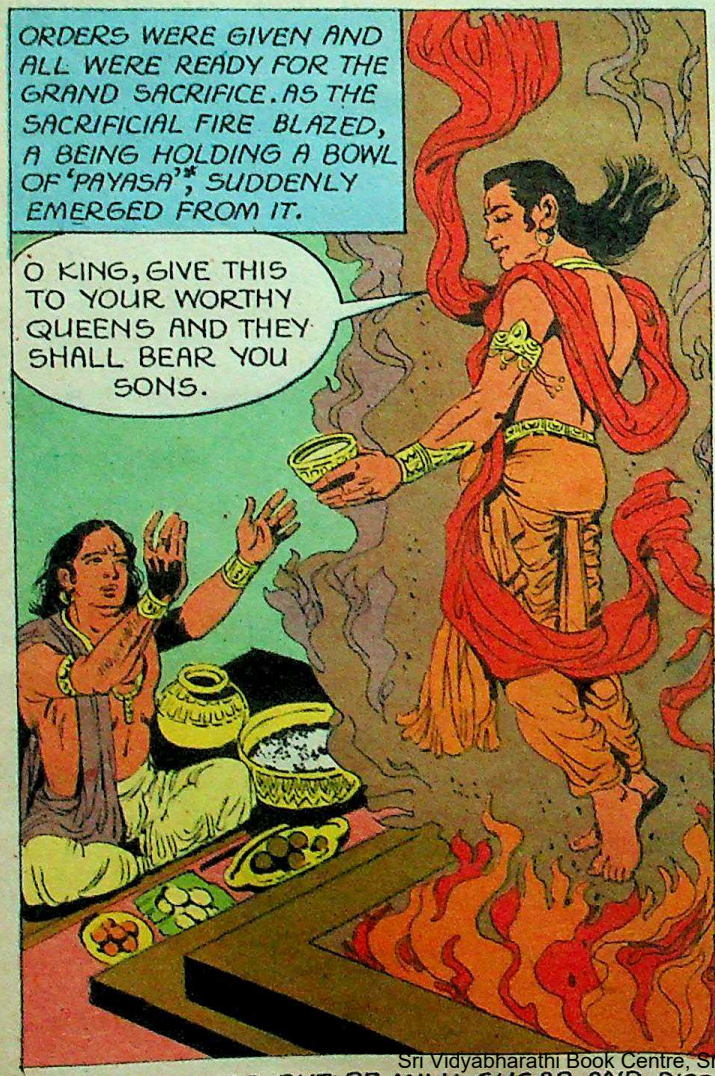

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* A GRUEL MADE OUT OF MILK, SUGAR AND RICE.

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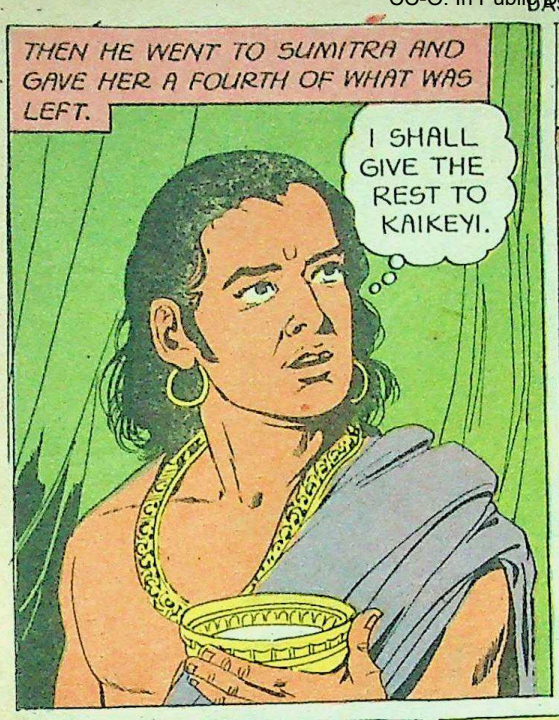

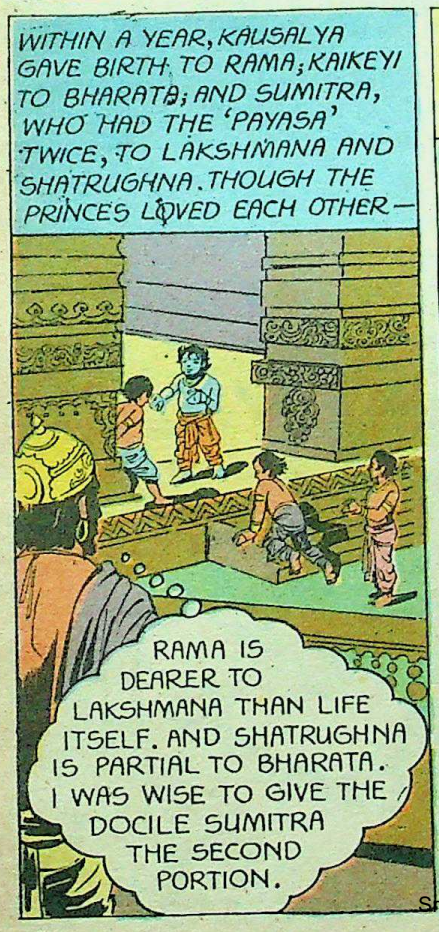

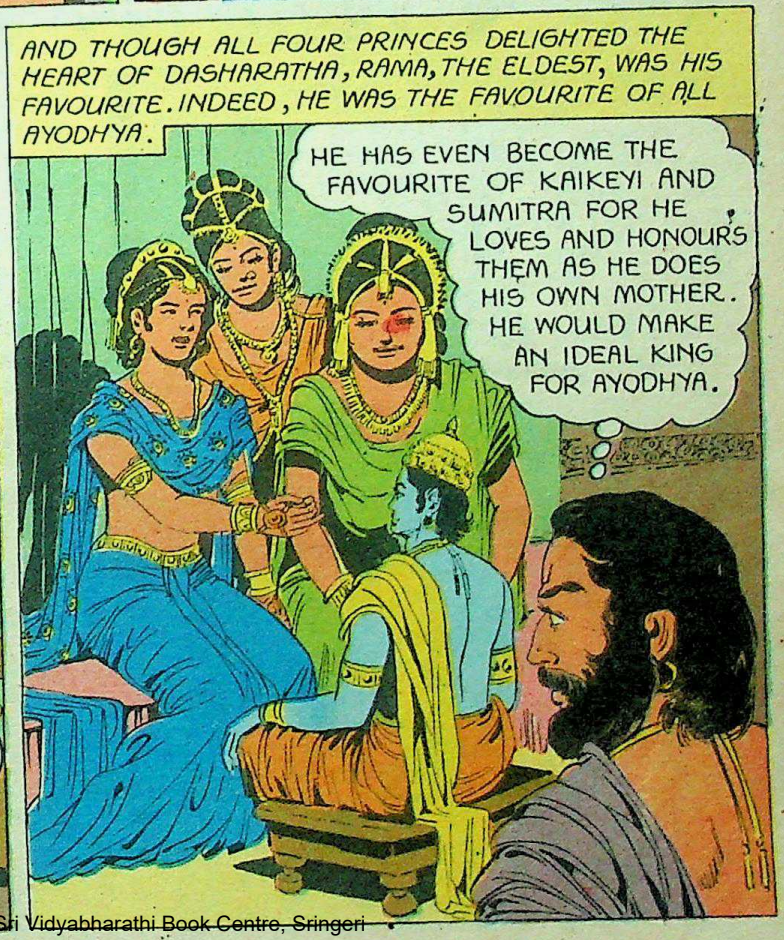

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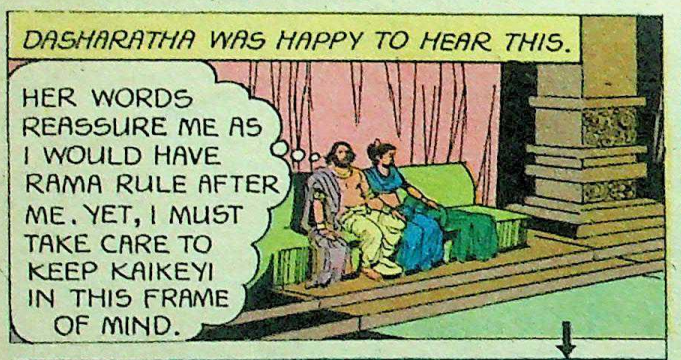

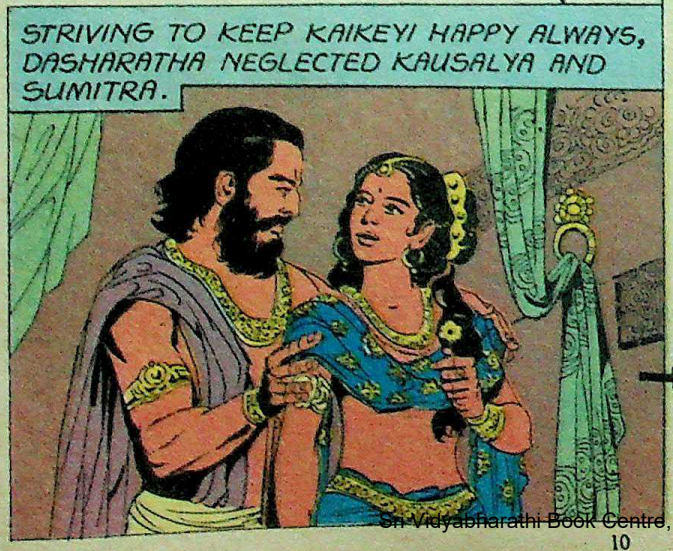

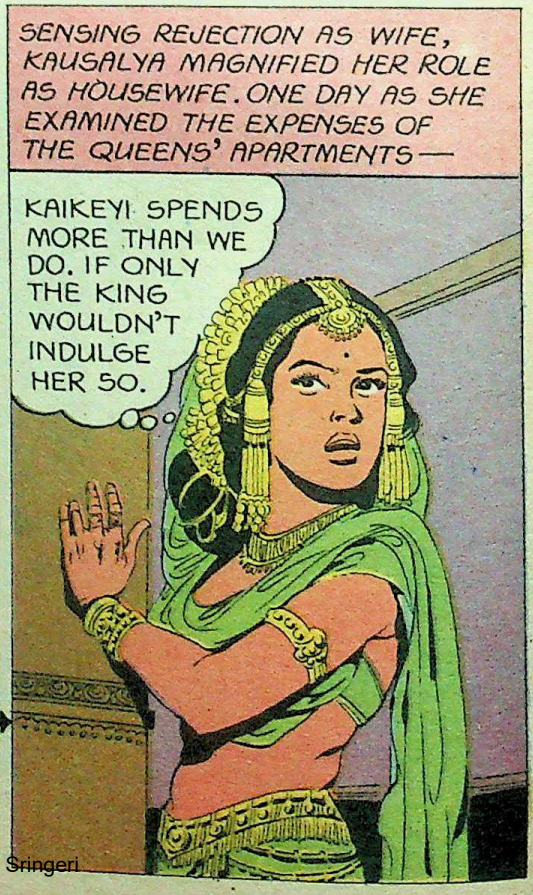

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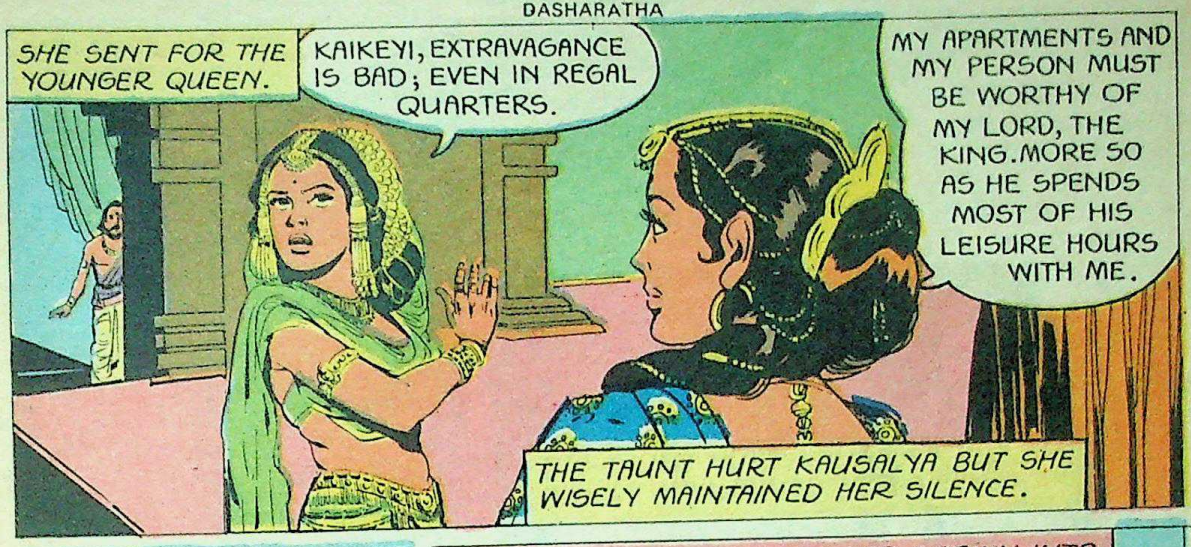

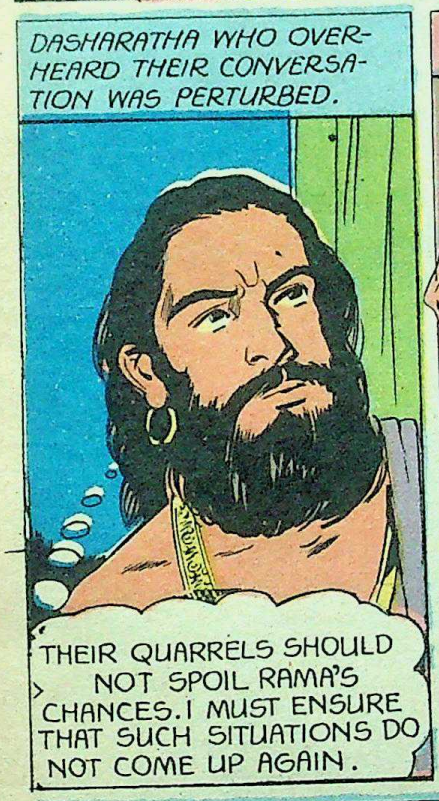

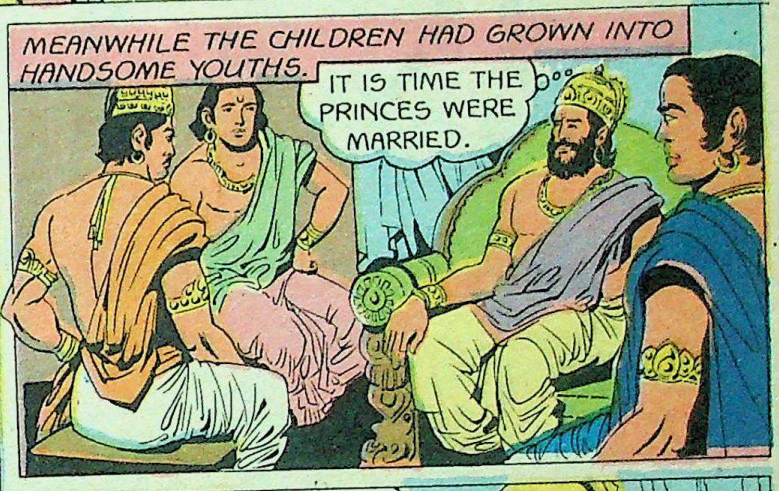

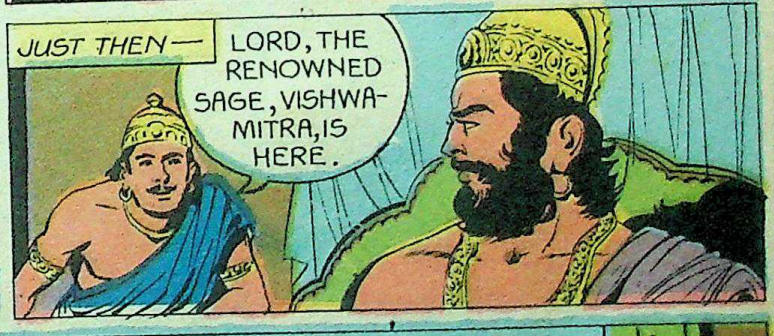

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*DEMONS

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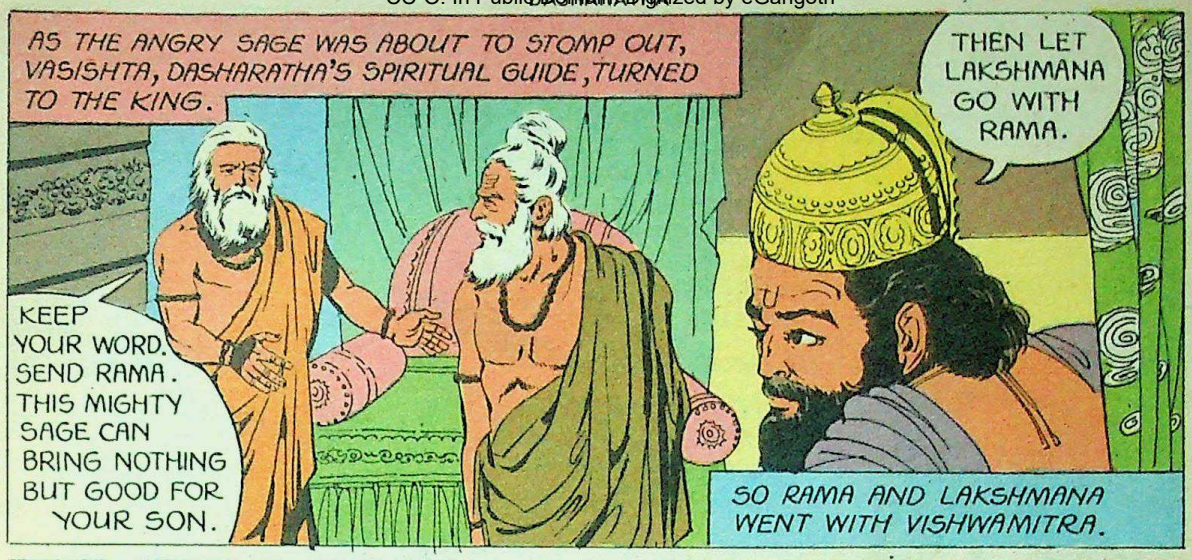

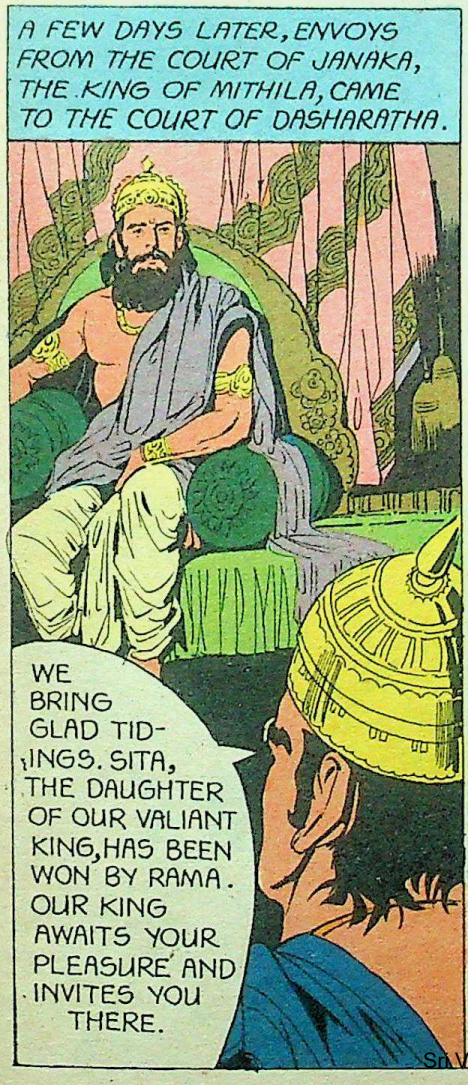

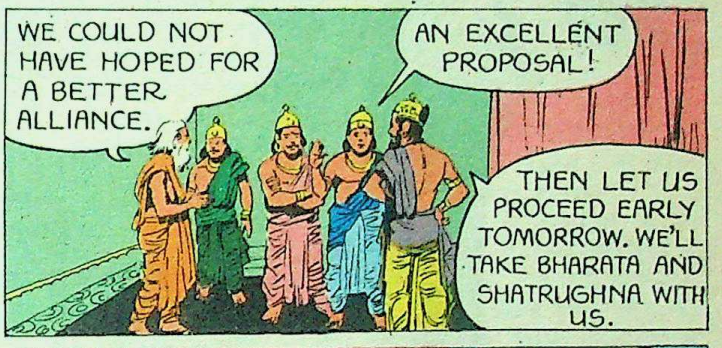

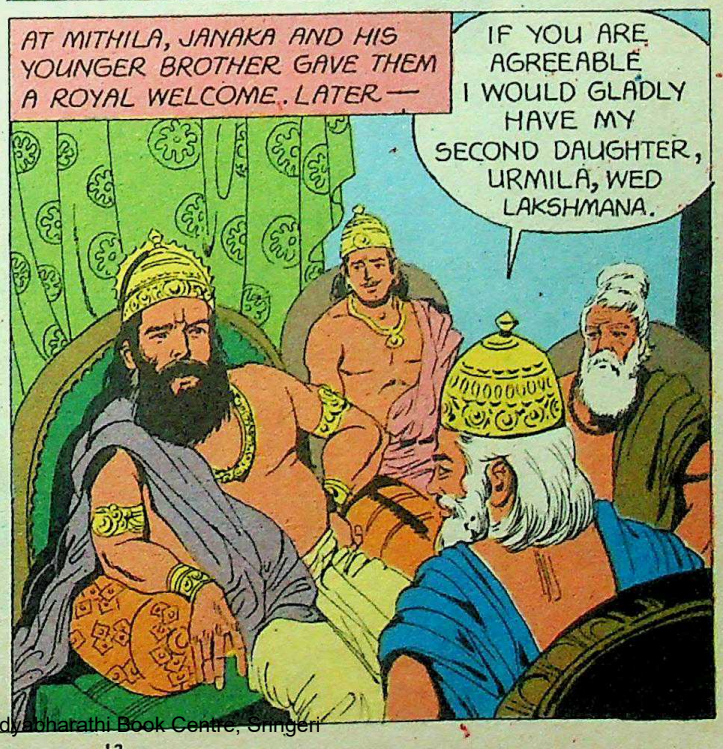

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AS WAS THE CUSTOM IN THOSE DAYS, VASISHTHA ANSWERED ON BEHALF OF DASHARATHA.

THE PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED. IF YOU ARE WILLING WE WOULD ALSO ACCEPT YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER'S DAUGHTERS FOR BHARATA AND SHATRUGHNA.

JANAKA WAS OVERJOYED.

THEN LET THE FOUR PRINCES BE MARRIED ON THE SAME DAY. THE ROYAL FAMILIES OF KOSALA AND MITHILA SHALL PROSPER IN THE UNION.

WHILE THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WEDDINGS WERE GOING ON, KAIKEYI'S BROTHER, YUDDHAJIT, CAME TO MITHILA AND PRESENTED HIMSELF BEFORE DASHARATHA.

MY FATHER SENT ME TO AYODHYA TO TAKE BHARATA TO OUR KINGDOM FOR A FEW YEARS. I HEARD THE NEWS THERE AND FOLLOWED YOU TO MITHILA.

WELCOME, YUDDHAJIT. IT IS FORTUNATE THAT YOU ARE HERE NOW.

AS SOON AS THE ARRANGEMENTS WERE OVER, AN AUSPICIOUS DAY WAS FIXED AND THE NUPTIALS PERFORMED.

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DASHARATHA AND THE YOUNG COUPLES RETURNED TO A JUBILANT AYODHYA. AT THE PALACE, DASHARATHA'S WIVES STOOD JOYOUS AND EXPECTANT.

WELCOME, DEAR DAUGHTERS. MAY YOU KNOW ONLY HAPPINESS IN YOUR NEW HOME.

A FEW MONTHS LATER, DASHARATHA SENT FOR BHARATA.

YOU MAY NOW GO WITH YOUR UNCLE TO YOUR GRAND-FATHER.

AS THE YEARS WENT BY, RAMA'S EXCELLENCE, NOW AS A HOUSEHOLDER, ENDEARED HIM EVEN MORE TO THE AGE-ING KING. ONE DAY—

I SHALL SEE RAMA CROWNED YUVRAJA, WITHOUT ANY DELAY. I SHALL ANNOUNCE MY DECISION AT AN ASSEMBLY OF ELDERS, KINGS AND WISE MEN.

DASHARATHA SOON MADE HIS WISH KNOWN TO HIS COUNSELLORS. THEN—

...AND AS TIME IS RUNNING OUT THERE IS LITTLE NEED TO INVITE ASHWAPATHI AND JANAKA TO THE CORONATION.

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AT THE ASSEMBLY, AFTER DASHARATHA ANNOUNCED HIS DECISION—

IF ANY AMONG YOU FEEL THAT THIS CHOICE IS THAT OF A FOND FATHER AND NOT A JUST KING, LET ME KNOW WHAT I SHOULD DO.

THE KINGS AND SAGES AT THE SABHA WEIGHED THE MATTER CAREFULLY. THEN—

O JUST KING, INSTALL RAMA AS THE HEIR-APPARENT. WE, THE PEOPLE, LOOK FORWARD TO IT.

DASHARATHA WAS PLEASED. HE TURNED TO SUMANTRA, HIS FAVOURITE COUNSELLOR.

BRING RAMA HITHER.

A LITTLE LATER RAMA ENTERED THE ASSEMBLY.

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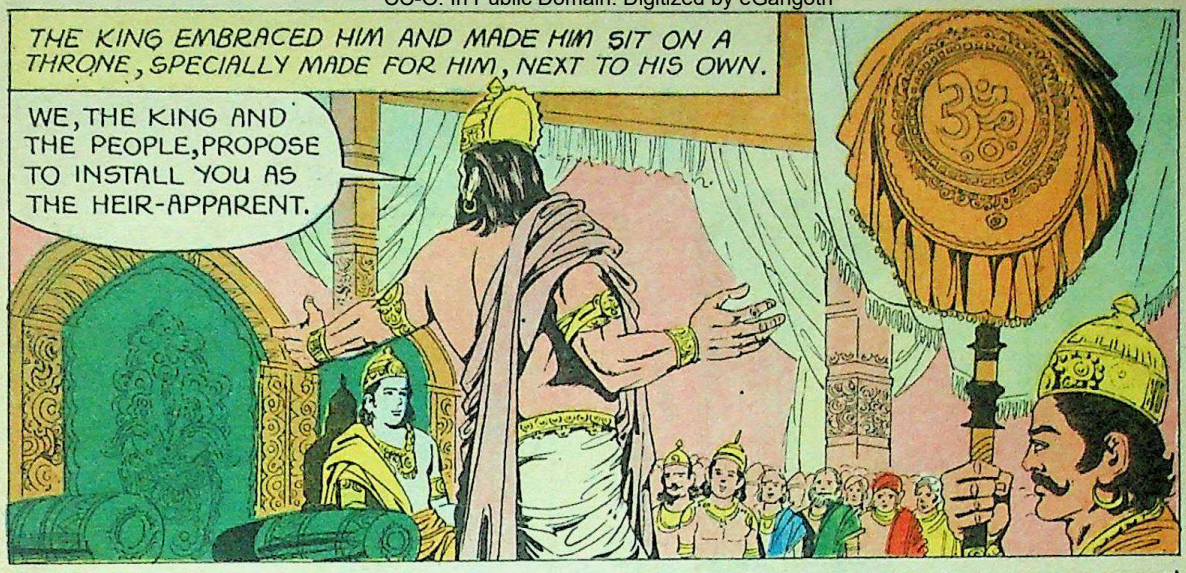

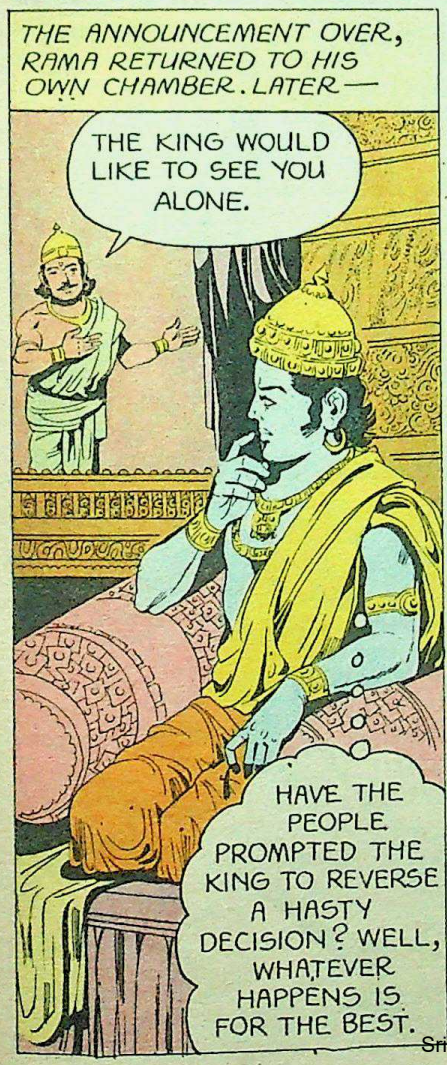

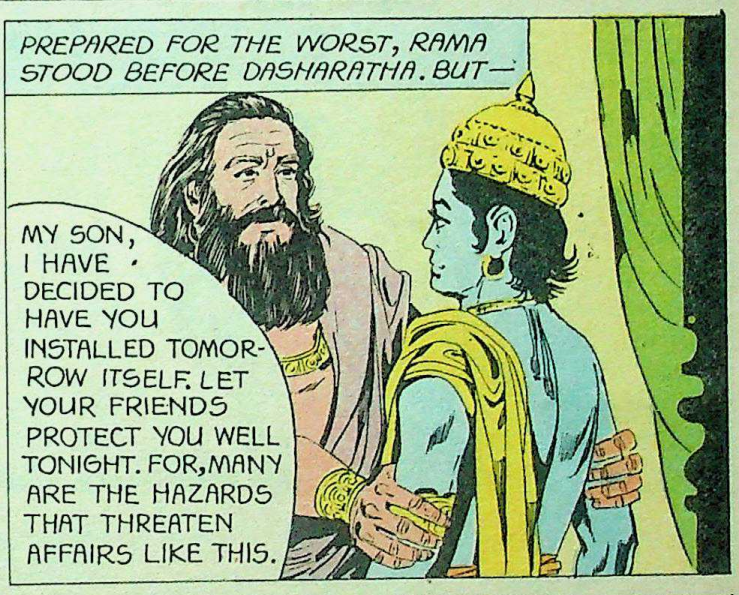

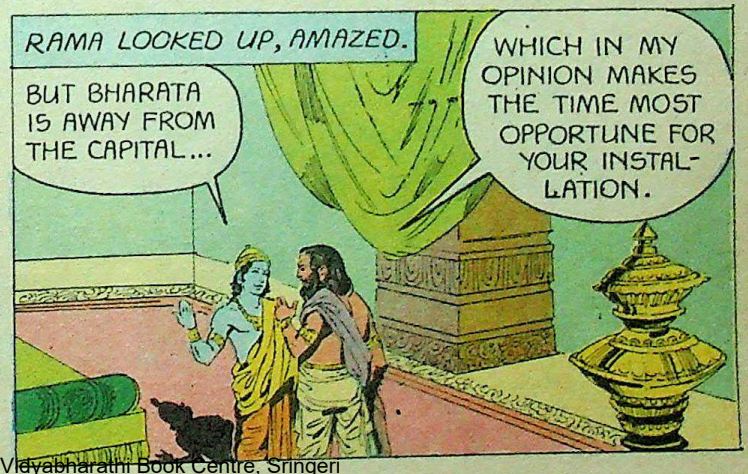

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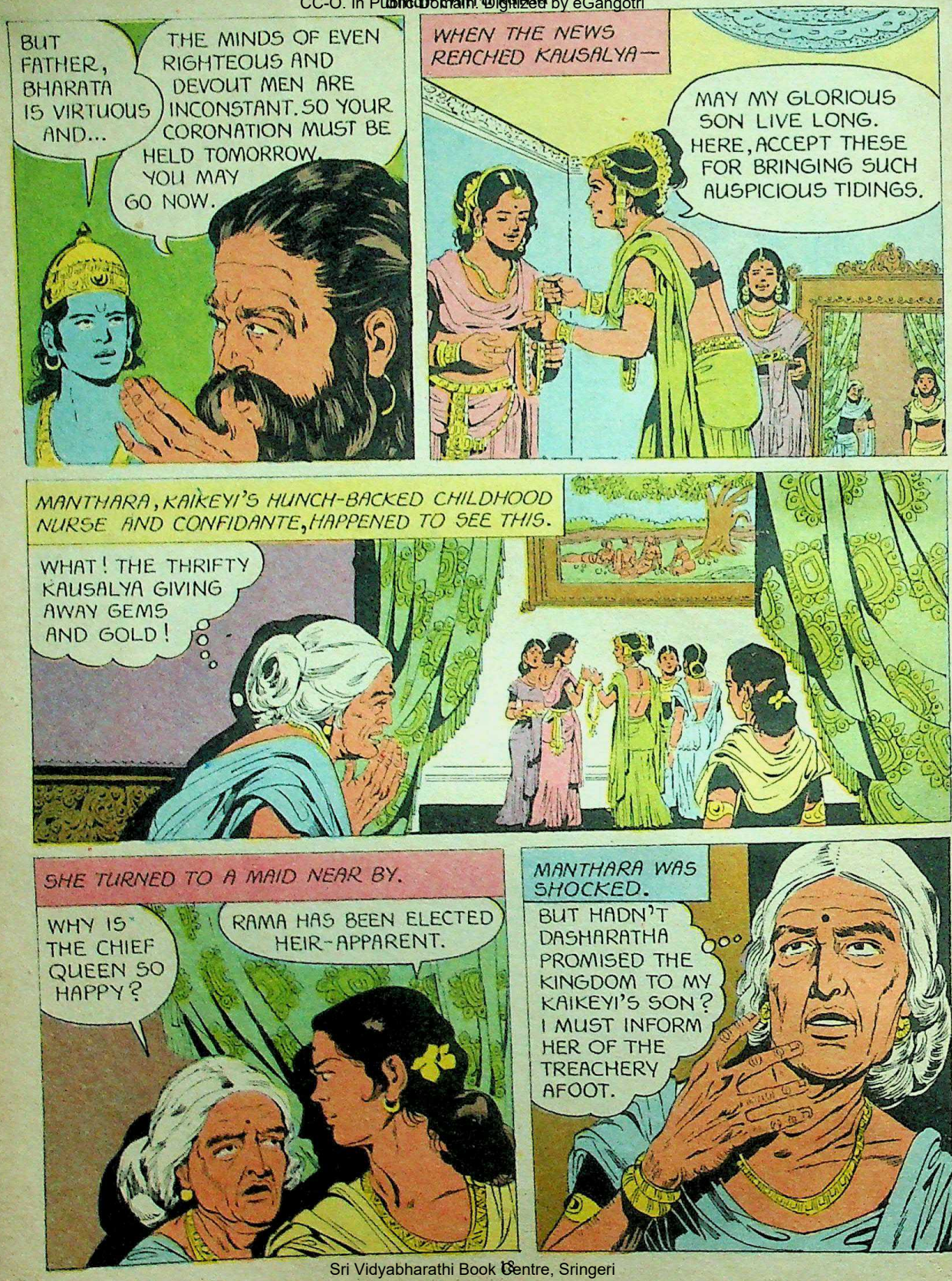

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A LITTLE LATER, RAMA CAME TO HIS MOTHER'S APARTMENTS. SUMITRA, LAKSHMANA AND SITA WERE ALREADY THERE.

MOTHER, THE PRIESTS SAY THAT SITA MUST FAST WITH ME TONIGHT. PLEASE ARRANGE ALL THAT WE WILL NEED FOR IT.

KAUSALYA TREMBLED WITH DELIGHT TO HEAR THE WORDS SHE HAD EVER HOPED TO HEAR.

O RAMA, YOU MUST PLEASE THE HEARTS OF SUMITRA'S SONS TOO.

LAKSHMANA, MY LIFE AND THIS KINGDOM, TOO, ARE YOURS. RULE WITH ME.

MEANWHILE, IN HER ELEGANT CHAMBER, AS KAIKEYI AWAITED DASHARATHA, SHE REFLECTED ON HER GOOD FORTUNE.

EVER SINCE I CAME AS HIS BRIDE TO AYODHYA, THE KING HAS NEVER LET ME KNOW A MOMENT OF PAIN OR NEGLECT. EVEN BHARATA'S ABSENCE DOES NOT PAIN ME. RAMA BY HIS DEVOTION DOES NOT LET ME FEEL IT. IF ONLY KAUSALYA TOOK MORE KINDLY TO ME...

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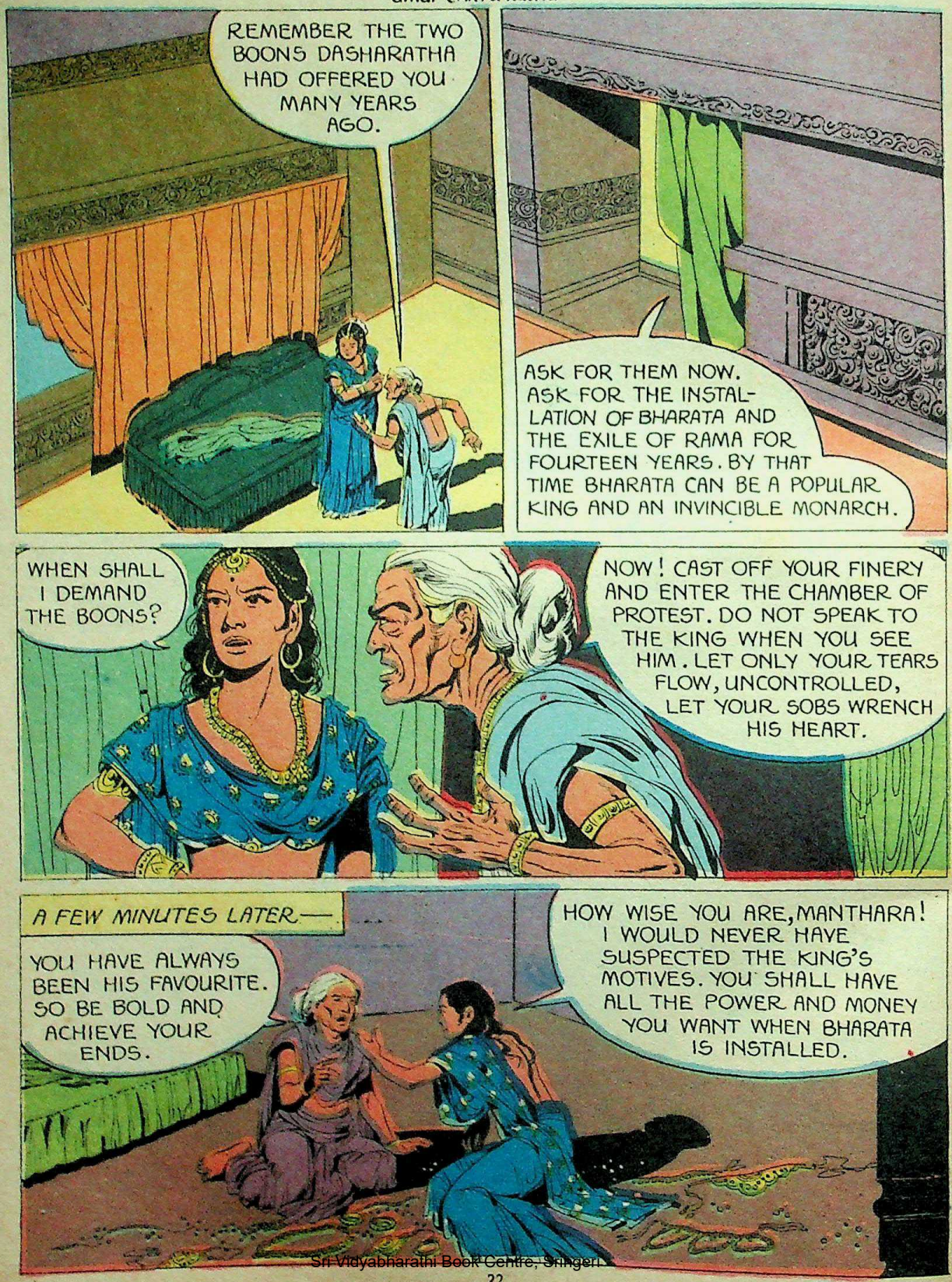

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KAIKEYI SLOWLY LOOKED UP.

NO, MY LORD. I WANT SOMETHING DONE. IF YOU PROMISE TO DO IT, I WILL SPEAK.

YOU KNOW THAT EXCEPT RAMA WHO IS MY VERY LIFE, THERE IS NO ONE DEARER TO ME THAN YOU. I SWEAR BY RAMA THAT I WILL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.

REMEMBER THE TWO BOONS YOU HAD OFFERED ME MANY YEARS AGO? I WANT THEM NOW. IF YOU REFUSE I WILL GIVE UP MY LIFE.

NAME THE BOONS AND I SHALL SEE THAT THEY ARE YOURS.

THEN LET MY SON BE PROCLAIMED HEIR-APPARENT AND LET RAMA BE BANISHED TO THE FOREST FOR FOURTEEN YEARS.

DASHARATHA WAS STUNNED. HAD HE HEARD RIGHT?

NO-O-O-O! I MAY BANISH KAUSALYA OR SUMITRA BUT NEVER RAMA, MY ELDEST SON WHOSE LOVE SUSTAINS MY LIFE.

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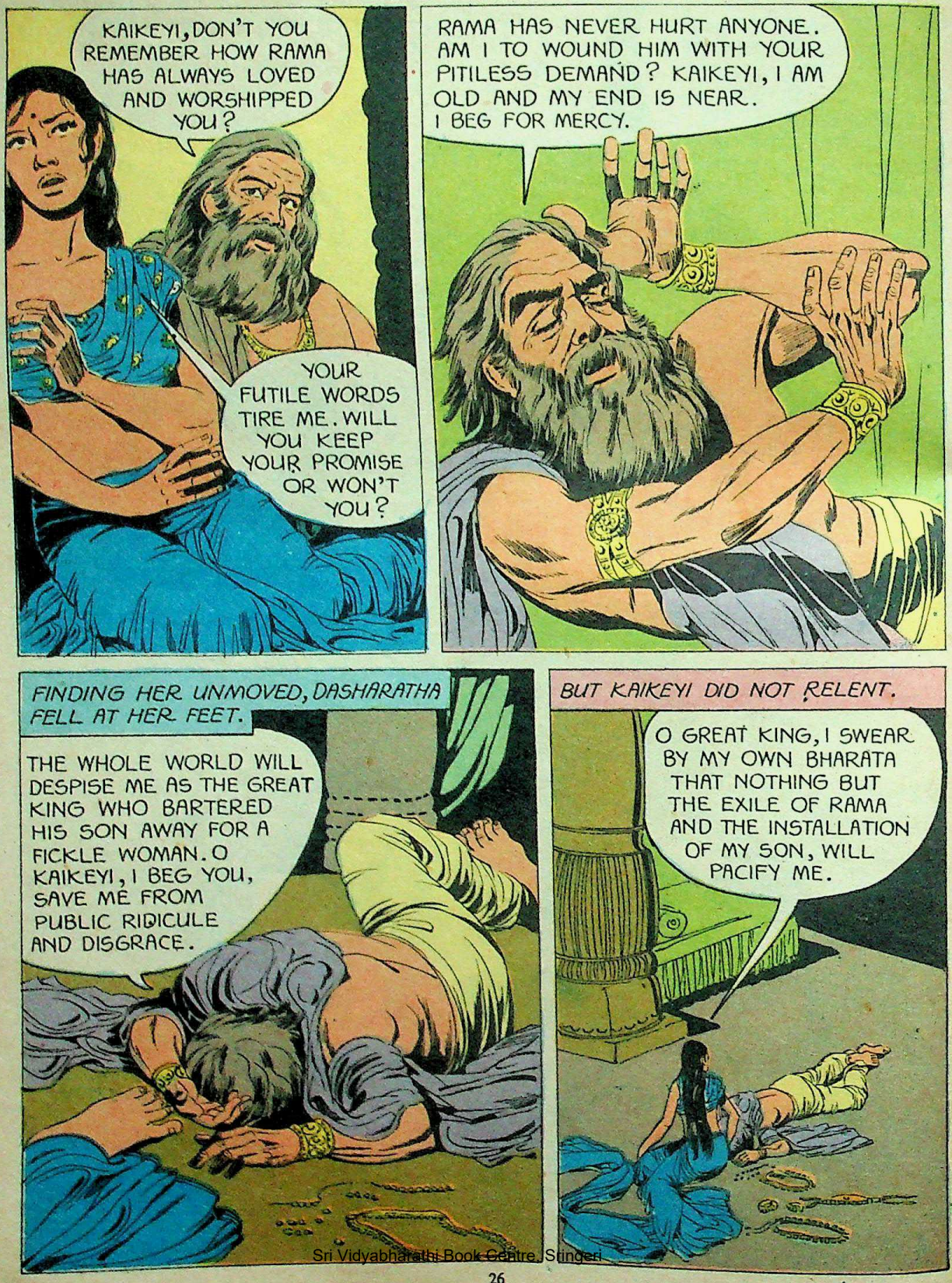

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BY THEN, IT WAS ALMOST MORNING.

MY BELOVED SON WILL OBEY ME. OH THAT IT WERE NOT SO! FOR IF HE DOES I WILL DIE. KAIKEYI, I CONSENT. LET RAMA GO TO THE FOREST AND LET THE PREPARATIONS FOR TOMORROW, BE FOR MY FUNERAL.

O KING, DO NOT RAVE LIKE ONE MAD. INSTALL MY SON ON THE THRONE AND BANISH YOURS.

SHOCKED BY HER CRUEL WORDS, DASHARATHA FAINTED. JUST THEN, AN ANXIOUS SUMANTRA SENT BY VASISHTHA CAME THERE.

MY LORD, IT IS TIME FOR THE CEREMONY. WE AWAIT YOUR ORDERS.

TO MAKE SURE THAT HER PLANS SHOULD NOT FALL THROUGH, KAIKEYI ANSWERED FOR DASHARATHA.

O SUMANTRA, EXCITED ABOUT THE COMING EVENT THE KING HAS HAD A SLEEPLESS NIGHT. HE IS TIRED. BRING RAMA HERE TO HIM FOR HIS BLESSINGS. QUICK!

THE EFFICIENT QUEEN TOO, IS IMPATIENT TO SEE RAMA INSTALLED. I MUST HURRY.

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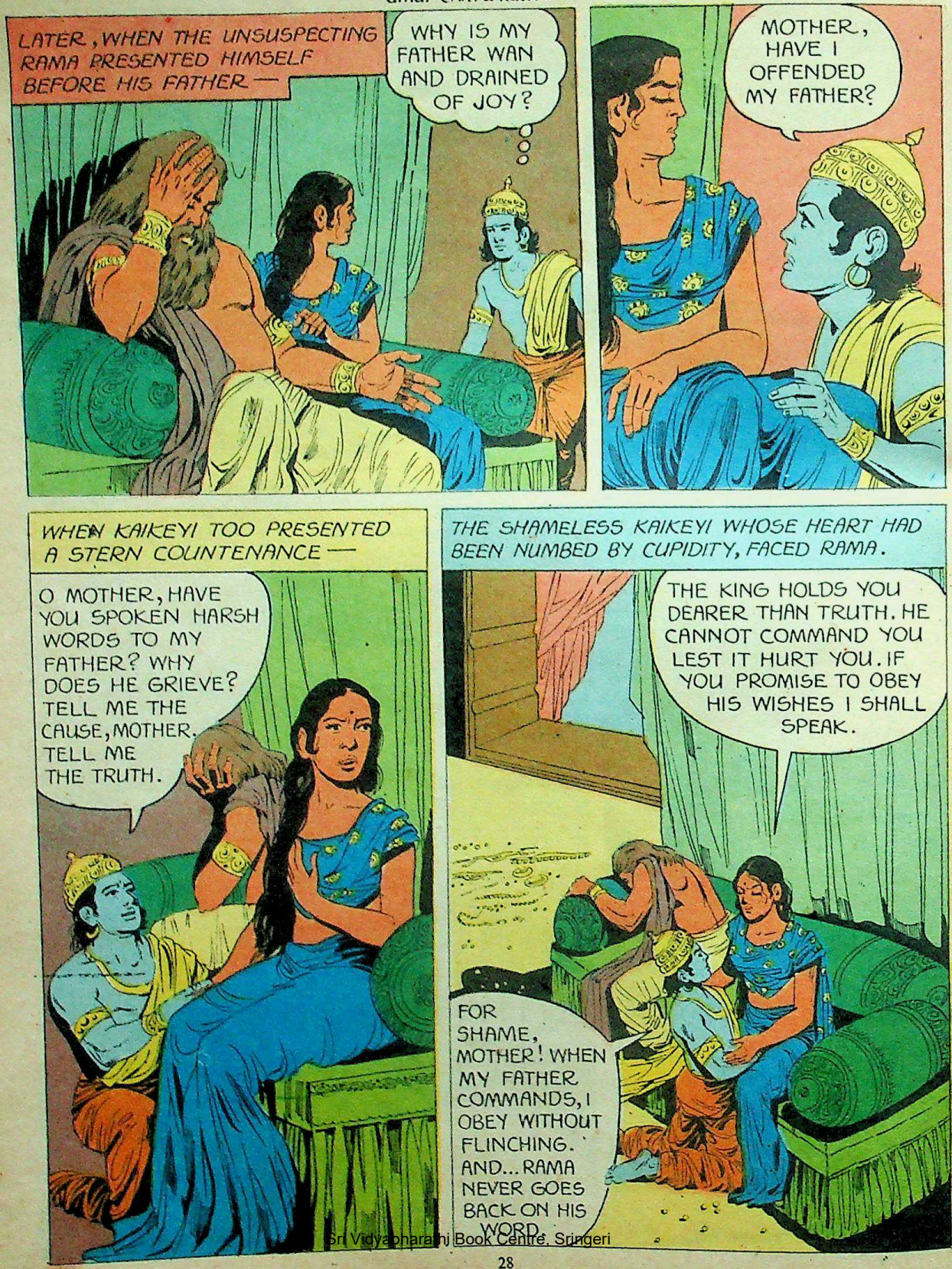

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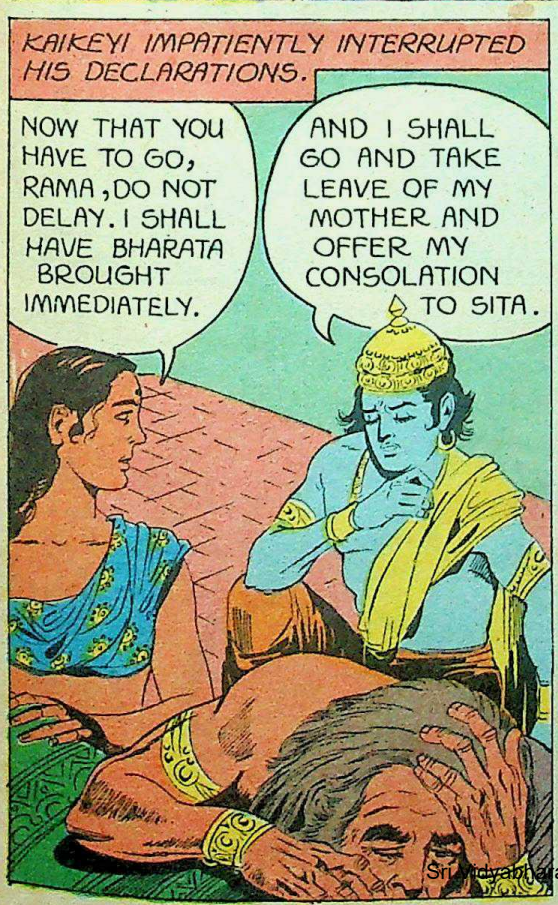

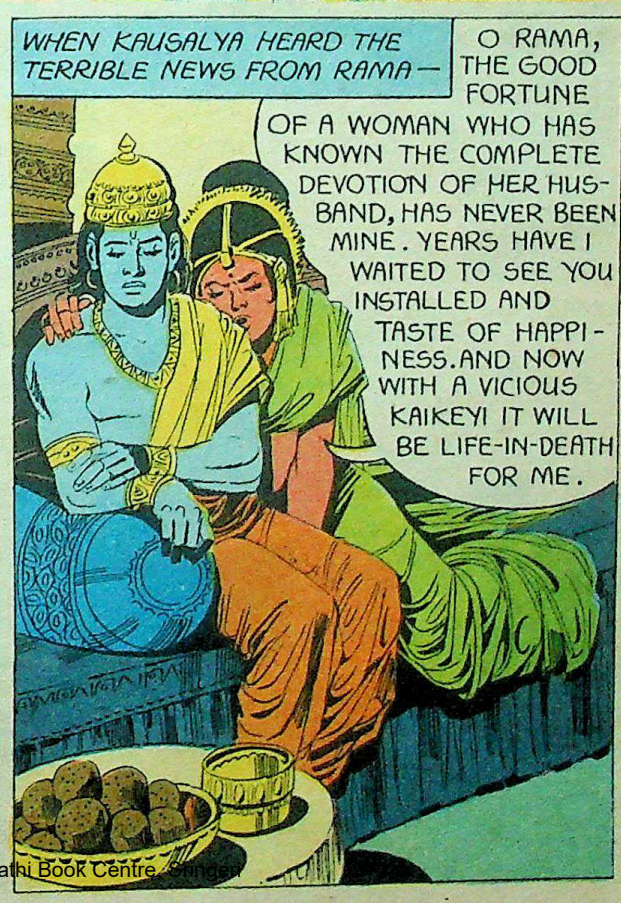

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Singer

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ON THE FIFTH DAY AFTER RAMA LEFT, KAUSALYA, UNABLE TO RESTRAIN HERSELF ANY LONGER, TURNED UPON THE KING.

O KING, IGNORING ME YOU BANISHED MY SON. I MAY NOT EVEN FOLLOW HIM LEST YOU BE DESOLATE. YOU HAVE RUINED ME AND MY SON AND ALL AYODHYA.

FULL OF ANGUISH, DASHARATHA PLEADED WITH HER.

PLEASE, KAUSALYA, I ENTREAT YOU, I AM YOUR HUSBAND, VIRTUOUS OR WORTHLESS. AND I KNOW YOU TO BE WISE.

KAUSALYA, MOVED BY THE GREAT MONARCH'S HUMILITY, WAS ASHAMED OF HER OWN OUTBURST.

O LORD, DO NOT SHAME ME. A WELL-BRED WOMAN SHOULD NEVER MAKE A SUPPLICANT OF HER LORD. PARDON MY TRANSGRESSION.

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ON THE SIXTH NIGHT OF RAMA'S DEPARTURE, A MEDLEY OF PAST DEEDS RACED ACROSS DASHARATHA'S BEFUDDLED MIND, BUT ONE STOOD OUT CLEAR—THE KILLING OF THE INNOCENT YOUTH. HE HALTINGLY NARRATED THE WHOLE INCIDENT TO KAUSALYA. THEN—

HIS FATHER'S CURSE HAS COME TRUE. I DIE YEARNING FOR MY SON. O KAUSALYA, I CANNOT SEE YOU. COME NEAR AND TOUCH ME.

SEEING THAT HIS END WAS NEAR, KAUSALYA SENT FOR SUMITRA.

O MY PRINCE, MY SON, WHERE ARE YOU? O KAUSALYA! AH, GENTLE SUMITRA! I...

NO! LORD DO NOT LEAVE US AND GO...

OVERCOME BY GRIEF FOR HIS EXILED SON, DASHARATHA, A VICTIM OF HIS OWN KARMA, BREATHED HIS LAST.

BUT ALL KAIKEYI'S EFFORTS TO SECURE THE THRONE FOR HER SON WERE FUTILE. FOR BHARATA WOULD NOT ASCEND IT. WHEN RAMA REFUSED TO RETURN TO AYODHYA TILL HE HAD FULFILLED HIS PLEDGE, BHARATA PLACED RAMA'S SLIPPERS ON THE THRONE AND RULED THE KINGDOM FOR HIM, TILL HE RETURNED TO BE THE KING.